

MEMORANDUM

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

INFORMATION

23839

November 27, 1970

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger *HK*

SUBJECT: Pakistan Disaster Relief

Latest Developments

The following are the major new developments on the Pakistan relief effort:

--Our medical survey team in East Pakistan reports that there is no need for the U. S. to move hospitals to the disaster area for surgical or medical patients since the Pakistanis have this situation under control. A further assessment in the next day or so will reveal if aid stations are needed to replace the demolished rural health centers, although the team so far reports they are not necessary. Shot teams to give immunizations should also be assessed over a little longer period, but the evaluation so far is that cholera and other diseases are not on the increase. The team concludes that the main emphasis for now should remain on getting rice into the areas where all of the food supply has been destroyed. An Army Preventive Medicine unit is still being held on alert in case this picture suddenly changes.

--The main focus continues to be on the food distribution effort, especially to those areas where all food supplies have been wiped out. A total of over 30 helicopters (10 U. S.) are now operational in the relief effort. The Pakistani authorities seem satisfied that this is an adequate airlift, but because they have not always been as alert to the needs as might be hoped, instructions have been sent to our people in the field to immediately assess the situation on their own. We are prepared to send as many helicopters to the disaster area as are requested.

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--President Yahya has returned to East Pakistan to personally supervise relief operations after coming under heavy criticism from the East Pakistanis, foreign press and opposition politicians. Our embassy in Islamabad reports that, for a variety of reasons, the central government has been especially slow in mounting an effective relief operation. In part this is because of bureaucratic inadequacies but there is also a certain amount of apathy in West Pakistan about the plight of the East Pakistanis. Hopefully Yahya will be able to jolt his Administration into increased action.

--The Pope reportedly will stop in East Pakistan this weekend during his Asian Trip to dramatize his concern.

--Maurice Williams, the head of the Interdepartmental Working Group, is considering making a special trip to East Pakistan next week. He would be primarily concerned with getting a better feel for the longer range requirements for reconstruction and rehabilitation.

Conclusions

The immediate emergency relief effort seems to be gradually reaching a peak, although there is much more to be done. The international pipeline of relief supplies is full and new requirements are generally being met on a timely basis. The major problem at this point is keeping the Pakistani bureaucracy up to speed with the foreign relief effort. President Yahya's presence on the scene should help but we may have to nudge them a bit if, for instance, it became clear that more helicopters are needed.

As the magnitude of the disaster becomes more clear, it is becoming increasingly evident that the emergency relief phase is going to stretch out longer than was initially expected. By most accounts this is the greatest natural disaster in terms of destruction and danger to human life of the century and perhaps of recorded history. As such there may be an extended period of transition between emergency relief and the longer term reconstruction phase, when we will simply be sustaining the victims. During this period the Administration will remain exposed to criticism from those who fail to realize the magnitude of both the disaster and the problems of coping with it. So far, however, I think we have a solid record to stand on.

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